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to **FEEL GREAT**

The following little changes can improve your arthritis symptoms and boost your spirits. BY SHARON LIAO

When it comes to improving your health and easing your arthritis pain, big changes, like overhauling your diet or starting an exercise regimen, generally come to mind. But it's often the little tweaks that are the most effective, because they're easier to incorporate into your usual routine. In fact, research shows that small moves, like going on a short stroll or snacking on nuts, can have a significant impact on your happiness, energy and pain levels as well as your overall well-being.

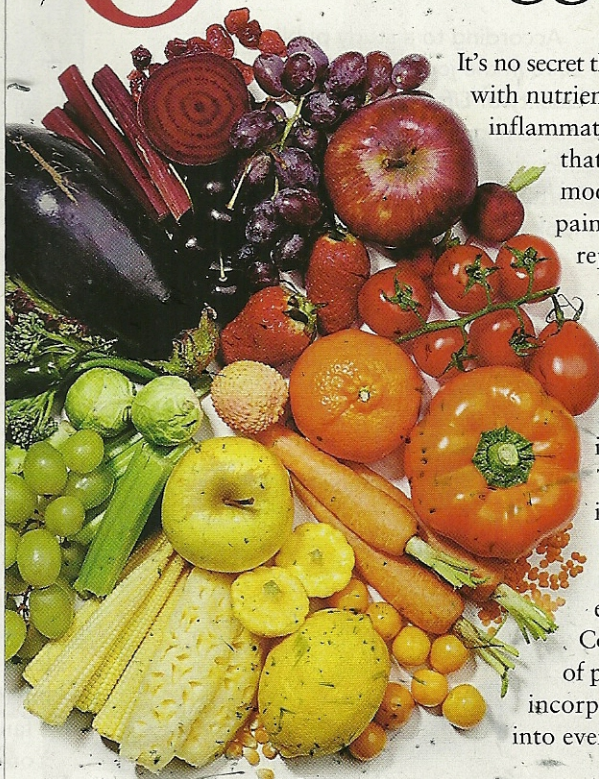
Ready to start feeling your best? Try one of the following 25 tips each day, and you'll reap the benefits before the end of the month.

5 Remember to floss.

About half of Americans don't floss their teeth regularly, according to a 2008 survey from the American Dental Association. Not only can neglecting your gums harm your smile, but several studies have linked gum disease and tooth loss with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and joint pain. Can't stand flossing? Pick up a product that makes it more enjoyable and easier, such as flavored floss or handheld picks.

7 DRINK UP. Drinking plenty of water can decrease the likelihood of a gout attack. And even a 1 or 2 percent dip in your hydration level – right around when you're feeling thirsty – can lead to headaches, fatigue and difficulty concentrating, reports a 2012 *Journal of Nutrition* study. Keep a water bottle on hand and sip throughout the day.

6 Eat more fruits and veggies.



It's no secret that fresh produce is packed with nutrients that can help lower inflammation. New research shows that it can also boost your mood, which eases stress and pain. New Zealand scientists reported in the January 2013 *British Journal of Health Psychology* that study participants reported feeling calmer and happier on days they ate at least seven servings of fruits and vegetables. The complex carbohydrates in produce can increase levels of serotonin, a happiness-inducing brain chemical, explains study author Tamlin Conner, PhD, a senior lecturer of psychology. She recommends incorporating fruits and veggies into every meal and snack.

8

Take a short stroll.



It isn't always easy to get in the recommended 150 minutes of physical activity per week to boost your physical health, but as little as 15 minutes will make you happier and more enthusiastic, shows a study published in the December 2011 *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*. "Even a few minutes of exercise can trigger the release of endorphins," says Lillie Rosenthal, DO, a board-certified physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist in New York City.

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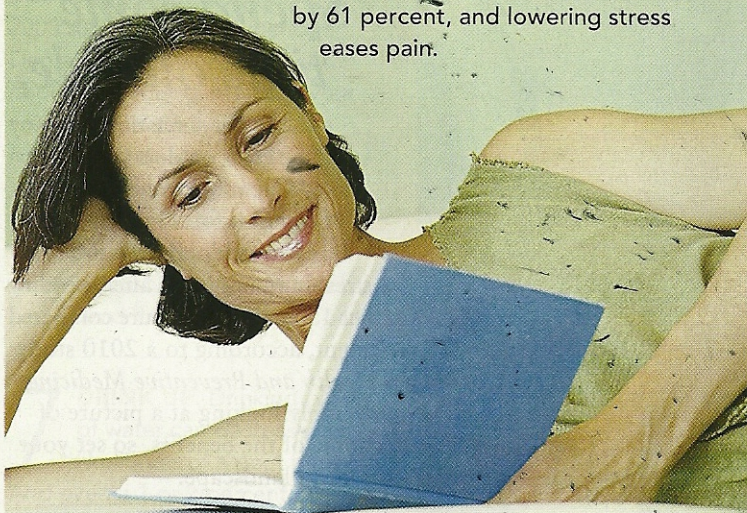
TAKE A BREATHING BREAK.

"Deep breathing stimulates the vagus nerve, which controls your body's relaxation response," says Julie Chen, MD, an integrative medicine physician in San Jose, Calif. It also helps reduce stress, which eases pain, and it may deliver more oxygen to the blood, upping your energy. How to do it: Inhale for a count of four to eight, and then exhale for twice that count. Continue for a minute or two.

15

Open a book.

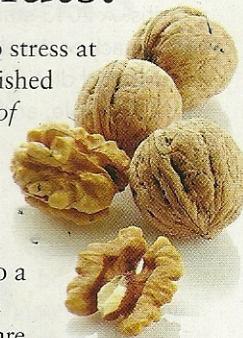
Reading something you enjoy for six minutes slashes stress levels by 68 percent, reveals an unpublished 2009 study by University of Sussex researcher David Lewis in Britain. Engaging your imagination clears your mind of worries and stimulates creativity, he explains. Or queue up some relaxing tunes; that reduced stress by 61 percent, and lowering stress eases pain.



16

Eat some walnuts.

This tasty snack may keep stress at bay. In a 2010 study published in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, people who ate about an ounce (or 18 halves) of walnuts a day experienced a lower blood pressure response to a high-pressure situation than those who didn't. Walnuts are rich in inflammation-fighting omega-3 fatty acids. Toss a few on salads, add them to yogurt or munch on them plain.



17

SWITCH OFF ELECTRONICS BEFORE BEDTIME.

Smartphones, tablets and computers emit a bright light that can interfere with your body's production of melatonin, a hormone that controls your sleep cycle. Chances are your arthritis already makes it tough to get a good night's sleep, so turn off electronic devices an hour before bedtime, suggests Michael Breus, PhD, author of *The Sleep Doctor's Diet Plan*.

18

Decorate with houseplants.

Research shows that being around greenery is good for your mind and body, from lowering blood pressure and stress to reducing perception of pain. Plus, certain plants – including spider plants, English ivy, rubber plants and Boston ferns – act as natural air detoxifiers, says Victoria Maizes, MD, executive director of the Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine in Tucson.



19

SMELL AROMATHERAPY OILS.

Studies show that certain smells, such as lavender and citrus, can take the edge off of your stress: "Your olfactory system is linked directly to the part of your brain that controls emotions and memory, so aromatherapy has a powerful effect," says Dr. Chen. She recommends adding a few drops to a room diffuser, or simply waving the cap beneath your nose.

20

FRAME A FAVORITE PICTURE.

Research shows that looking at photos of people and scenes you like can lift your spirits and help keep stress and pain at bay, so keep a favorite snapshot within sight, such as on your desk.